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## Khaleda says she's open to formal offer for dialogue

'PM, ministers have made path to parliament, talks thorny'



political situation, Khaleda admitted that in democracy certainly there is necessity for discussion. "But it can not take place by giving announcement at public meetings."

The BNP chief, who is leading an opposition movement for toppling the Awami League government, staying off the House, squarely blamed Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her ministers for vitiating the atmosphere for talks and their return to Parliament.

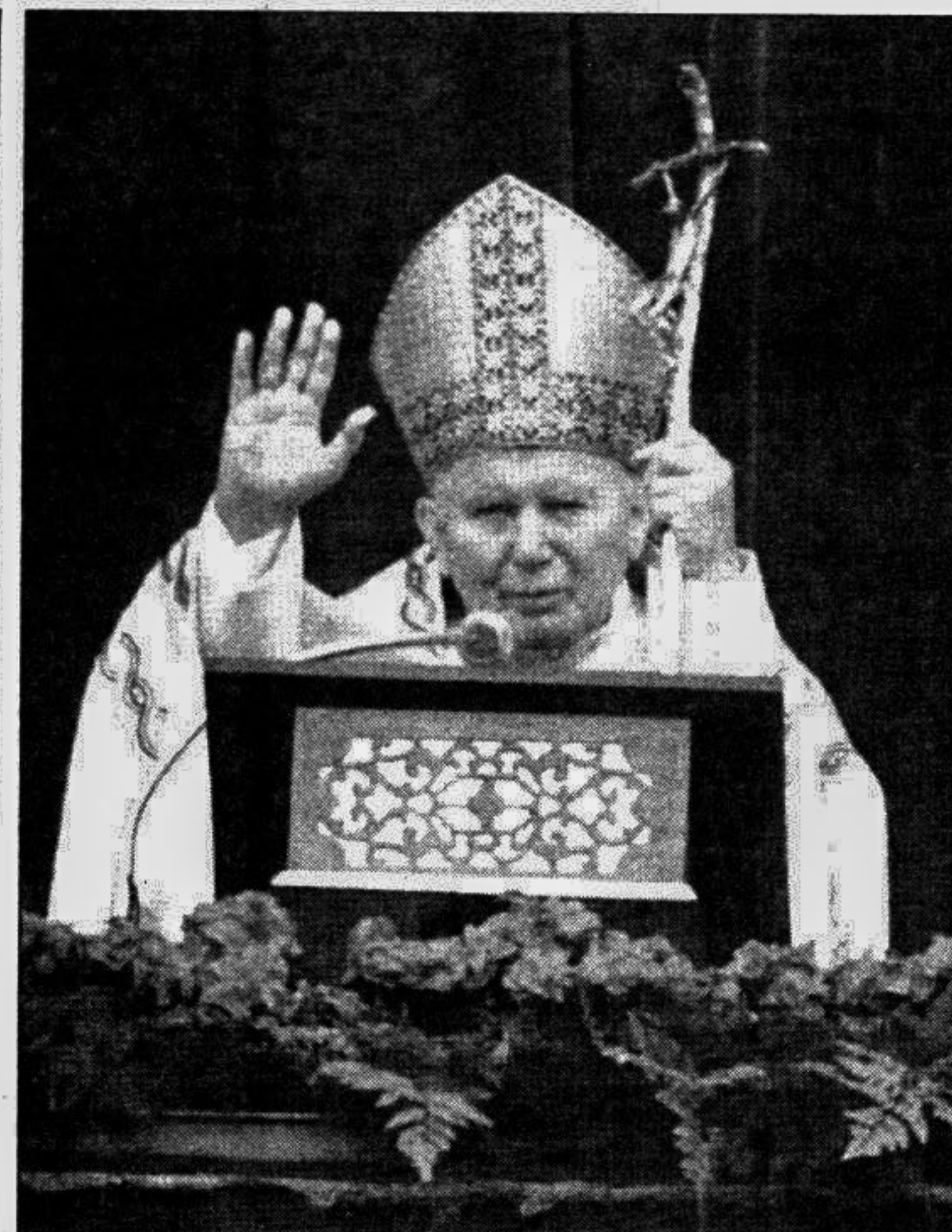
Asked whether she would take any initiative for discussion, Begum Zia said it is the responsibility of the government to move. The government is not creating the environment, she added.

"If they talk, certainly we will talk," she said, adding that she would be in her (Hasina's house) every New Year's day, but they vitiated the atmosphere.

Asked about the Speaker's letter, she said the Speaker did not invite for talks. Speaker Humayun Rasheed Chowdhury wrote to her requesting her to join the coming Parliament session, beginning January 1.

When her attention was drawn to the fact that BNP was attending the meetings of Parliamentary Standing Committees but boycotting parliament, Begum Zia said they did not boycott parliament but were just abstaining from attending the session.

Replying to a volley of questions on the country's volatile



Pope John Paul II blesses the crowd during his traditional Christmas Day "Urbi et Orbi" message, in front of thousands of faithful gathered in Saint Peter Square at the Vatican yesterday. (Story on Page 12) — AFP photo

## Flight of terror now in Afghanistan

Militants demand religious leader's release

KABUL, Dec 25: A hijacked Indian Airlines plane carrying as many as 161 people landed in southern Afghanistan on Saturday, the second day of a terrifying journey of landings and takeoffs that snaked across South Asia and into the Middle East, reports AP.

The hijackers issued their first demands asking India to release a Pakistani religious leader identified as Maulana Masood Azhar and several Kashmiri fighters, all of whom are in Indian jails, said Wakil Ahmed Muttawakil, Taliban spokesman.

The Taliban have passed on

the demand to the United Nations in New York and are demanding the United Nations negotiate with the hijackers, who landed the Indian Airlines plane in southern Kandahar, the Taliban headquarters.

"We have conveyed their demand to the UN. It is up to the UN to intervene and end this. The Taliban will not mediate," said Muttawakil in a telephone interview with The Associated Press.

Muttawakil said he met two of the hijackers, the first meeting with the hijackers since the horrific ordeal began Friday. Muttawakil said he couldn't be

sure of the nationality of the hijackers but "they looked like they could be Kashmiri."

Muslim militant secessionists have been waging a bitter and protracted insurgency in Indian held Kashmir demanding either outright independence for the Himalayan state or union with Islamic Pakistan.

The hijackers, who along the way released 27 hostages and the body of a dead man, have been refusing to leave Kandahar, said Muttawakil and have threatened to blow up the aircraft.

## Nepal admits security lapses at airport, suspends officials

KATHMANDU, Dec 25: Nepal admitted today that security lapses at Kathmandu airport were responsible for the hijacking of an Indian Airlines plane on a scheduled flight from the Nepal capital to New Delhi, reports Reuters.

"(That) the plane was hijacked means there were deficiencies," said a government spokesman.

### Commentary

## The PM must bear responsibility for this vandalism

By Mahfuz Anam

The Prime Minister and the Awami League President Sheikh Hasina must bear full responsibility for the last Friday's armed attack and subsequent vandalism at the launch ceremony of Kader Siddiqui's political party. Why? Because of what has been happening in the last year or so, especially in the last few months. This sort of political behaviour has become the norm in the climate that she and her party — the ruling Awami League — have created. Repeated attacks on the opposition rallies by armed cadres of the ruling party, bomb blasts in their

## Economy bodes ill

The overall economy of the country depicts a grim picture with poor performance during the first five months of the current fiscal year when revenue and export trailed far behind the target and government borrowings from banks increased, reports UNB.

Figures show revenue income fell by over Tk 700 crore in July-November period, mainly because of drastic fall in import duties. Revenue officials said rise in income tax and VAT revenues could not make up the fall in import duty.

NBR almost achieved 100 per cent success in income tax collection while also neared the target in VAT in the period. But they said the share of the import duty to gross revenue income declined and will continue to fall due to government's liberal import policy.

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) has failed to introduce mandatory pre-shipment

inspection (PSI), believed to fetch Tk 600 crore of additional revenue this year, although nearly six months have lapsed.

NBR's revenue target was Tk 6154.13 crore, while collection amounted to Tk 5430.34, showing a deficit of Tk 723.79 crore. The collection was, however, Tk 78.23 crore higher than the corresponding period last year.

The fixing of "unusually ambitious" estimate widened the gap between the target and achievement. Estimating an average 17 per cent growth was not pragmatic while annual revenue growth averaged 8 per cent in the previous years, NBR officials said.

At the beginning of the fiscal year, Finance Minister Shah AMS Kibria, however justified the target saying that it should be ambitious to expedite the growth.

Export also trailed the target by over 8 per cent in July-October

due to lackluster performance in readymade garment export that fetches 75 per cent of the country's annual export earning.

In July-October period, exports totalled Tk 8589 crore (US 1.75 billion dollar) as against the target of Tk 9324 crore (US 1.99 billion dollar), marking an 8 per cent fall, according to figures available at the Export Promotion Bureau.

There has been a little growth in export in November, but still it remains far behind the target, said export promotion officials, who are now busy processing export figures of November and December.

They said export earning is expected to be nearly US 400 million dollar in November as against the monthly target of 470 million. They hope a robust growth in December.

Officials said bad performance in garment export slowed down the overall export

earning. Garment was estimated to bring US 1.03 billion dollar in July-October, but the actual amounted to US 950 million dollar.

Meanwhile, government's borrowing from the banking sector increased significantly in the first five months of the current year compared to that of last year. The borrowing in July-November rose to Tk 1,977 crore as against Tk 442 crore during the same period last year.

Government's accumulated loans from banking sector stood at Tk 11,248 crore at the end of the last fiscal.

Although Finance Ministry officials explained it as a normal practice, Bangladesh Bank officials see a negative impact of excessive borrowings on the economy. They said poor revenue income and high expenditure forced the government to borrow so much from banks.

### Inside Today

**Article**  
**A Way Out of the Present Political Impasse**  
Column: Panorama by Dilara Chowdhury Page 4

### Shri, Iftar timings

Ramadan	Dec	Shri	Iftar
17	26	—	5-23
18	27	5-14	5-23
19	28	5-15	5-24

### Prayer Timings

December 26		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-14	5-22
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	3-42	4-00
Maghrib	5-21	5-28
Tarabi	7-15	7-45

Source: Islamic Foundation

## BCL GS, 30 others sued for vandalism

BCL general secretary Ajoy Kor Khokon and 30 others were sued in connection with the attack on the convention of Kader Siddique on Friday, reports UNB.

BCL leaders Gazi Mesbahuddin Shachu, Habib, Shaju, Sazzad Hossain, Shafiq, Akhtar Hossain, Kala Sentu were, among others, named in the FIR saying 20/25 other terrorists were involved in the attack.

Anwar Hossain Pahari, a leader of newly floated Krishak Samik Janata League fled the case with Ramna thana on Friday night alleging that the government supported terrorists attacked the convention at the Institution of Engineers.

The FIR said that the armed goons during the attack also damaged 10 vehicles. None was arrested in this connection.

Police picked up 10 supporters of Siddique from the spot, including Zahirul Islam and Shamsul Alam. They were produced before the court yesterday.

"The government supported armed goons attacked our convention. But police arrested our people," said advocate Fazlur Rahman, general secretary of the new party.

## Two MiGs arrive

By M Anwarul Haq

The first two of the eight MIG-29s being procured by the Bangladesh Air Force reached Dhaka yesterday.

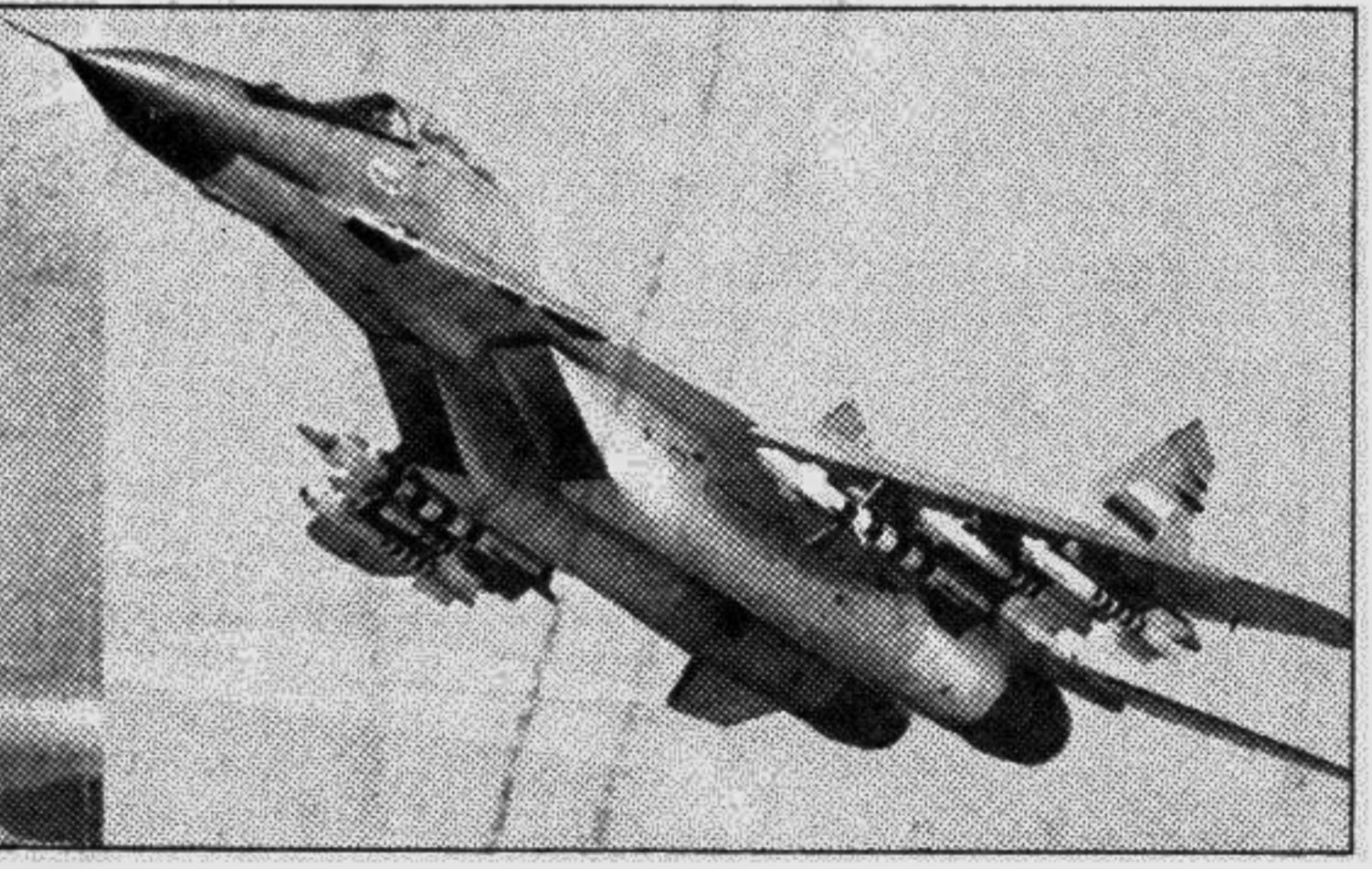
Both fighter model aircraft arrived on board the world's largest transporter freighter-AN-124. The freighters, capable of transporting seven large tanks in a single flight, brought the two MiGs in a completely installed condition, after only detaching their wings and tails for reasons of transportation safety.

The MIG transporter also flew in 150 boxes of essential equipment and spares.

The second batch of two more MIG-29s, which would be trainer-cum-fighter versions are due to reach Bangladesh on December 28, said Air Force sources.

The last four of the batch of eight MiGs are due to arrive by February next year.

The version bought by Bangladesh is known as MIG-29 Bs. It is a fourth-generation fighter and a multi-role jet. The MIG-29, which has components made from titanium features



## We did it but were not given the credit

By DU Correspondent

Many of the armed cadres of ruling Awami League's student wing at Dhaka University who vandalised Kader Siddique's convention in the city on Friday feel sorry that their act of 'heroism' was ignored by the media.

They regretted that their names and photographs were not published in newspapers.

Yesterday, they were seen boastfully discussing their 'operation', which was planned by their senior leaders on Thursday night at the Madhu's canteen.

Some central leaders of BCL also attended the emergency meeting, they said while talking to a group of DU correspondents of national dailies.

BCL activists Shafiq, Shimul and Arif of Mohsin Hall, Hemayet, Monir and Rizvi of Zia Hall, Hina of Shahidullah Hall and Polish of Bangabandhu Hall led the 'operation' in three phases.

Sajjad Hossain, DU unit president of BCL, supervised the operation done by about 50 cadres. Only 15 of them were carrying firearms, they said.

The cadres were divided into two groups and instructions were given accordingly, they said.

One group was asked to sit inside the convention venue in the guise of participants and the other was posted at the adjoining Suhrawardy Uddyan park, they added.

## Two-day hartal called in Sylhet after activist's death

Samad Azad declared *persona non grata*

From Staff Correspondent

SYLHET, Dec 25: A Shibir activist was killed and at least 200 others were injured when the activists of All Party Action Committee (Opposition) clashed with law enforcers in the town today.

Of the injured, eight were admitted to the Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital, five to police hospital, and others to private clinics.

The dead was identified as Abdul Momin Belal, 20, a student of Pathantola Jamea Islamia.

The trouble started at about 11 am when police at Zinda Bazar halted the Action Committee activists who tried to proceed towards the Court Point area for holding its scheduled rally.

The activists fired at police. Police lobbed tear gas shells to disperse them.

At one stage, police had to retreat as the demonstrators with full strength started proceeding towards the area. BDR rushed to the spot and fired several gunshots to bring the situation under control. Belal was shot in BDR firing.

He was rushed to the Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital where the doctors declared him dead.

The chase and counter-chase between the Action Committee activists and the Police and the BDR continued till 4-30 PM at the Madhuban, Zindabazar, Court-Point, Bandar Bazar areas.

Eleven activists of the Action Committee were picked up by police during the clashes.

All modes of transport were off the roads and the offices and business houses remained closed during hartal hours.

The action committee protesting the killing called a dawn-to-dusk hartal tomorrow and day after in the Sylhet district.

During the hour long clashes, Police and BDR fired over one hundred tear gas shells and more than 300 gunshots at Zindabazar, Madhuban, Court Point and Bandar Bazar areas. Over 500 crackers were exploded, sources said.

Twenty-six battalions of police and two platoons of BDR were deployed at key points of

## 'Policing is a service, not a political weapon'

Standing on the thresholds of a radically more challenging time of human civilisation, Bangladesh police is not that confident about its ability to deal with an emerging high-tech crime world and seeks a transformation to meet public security needs, reports UNB.

A number of incumbent and former police bosses gave the impression about the force's present standing and suggested it should be reorganised with massive training and modifying the recruitment policy to face the challenges of the new millennium as well as regain people's confidence.

"The policy of recruitment and training of police should be drawn up in line with the people's expectation and authorities' desire about the kind of service they actually want from them," said a retired police chief.

Opinions of a number of senior police officials, both in service and out, were sought on the performance of police on the eve of the millennium as the world braced itself with new hopes and apprehensions to welcome 2000.

Present performance or role of the police is not satisfactory to the people as they have virtually failed to gain people's confidence for various reasons, observers say.

Use of the force as a political weapon and corruption in a section of its personnel mainly battered its image.

"Now police can be utilised in only 12 per cent investigation works in Dhaka City as they are usually engaged in other less important jobs like socio-political programmes," says a high official.

Rather police forces should be involved in more investigation-oriented jobs to reap better results.

The police inherited the colonial rule that has not yet been modified elaborately in course of time to live up to people's expectations.

What do the police think about people's desire? What is their preparation to deal with next century's people who are believed to be more cautious, rational and sophisticated? Do they have any plans to change themselves? Are they happy with their present role for the people? What steps should be taken to make the police into a progressive force as per desire of the people?

Confronting this barrage of queries the police high-ups of former and present times offered their views and suggestions for a thorough update of the law-enforcing machinery.

Former IGP Ismail Hossain commented that if the police considered themselves as a 'force' and behave accordingly, they would never be able to win people's hearts and gain their confidence.

"The existing gap between the police and the people will not be bridged; rather it will widen gradually."

If police consider themselves as a 'service' and actually reach out to the people to serve them, the mistrust will gradually disappear and be replaced by respect and honour. There is only one option, not two options and that is to become a 'service', says Hossain giving his expert opinion.

"If our police chooses this option, I think, they definitely will have 'rewrite' their code of conduct and introduce a new culture of cooperation with the people, a culture of being friend of the people, part of the people."

دانشگاه اسلامی

# New Millennium Tips

Helping You to Enter the Year 2000 With Confidence

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